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SUBJECT: CODEL LIEBERMAN MEETS WITH HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST,  
ASMA JAHANGIR

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: In a January 9 meeting with Codel Lieberman, human rights activist Asma Jahangir expressed her great concern for the current political and economic atmosphere within Pakistan. She also has hope for the elections but sees that the relationship between the American and Pakistani governments as being a problem for the people of Pakistan. Senator Lieberman expressed the concerns of the U.S. during the recent state of emergency and for the civil liberties that were suspended but stressed that pressure from the U.S. would continue to be placed upon Musharraf for free and fair elections. End summary.

12. (C) Senator Joseph Lieberman, Ambassador, DCM, and Poloff (notetaker) met January 9 with Asma Jahangir, former Chairwoman and founding member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). Senator Lieberman was accompanied by Mr. Frederick Downey, the Military Legislative Advisor, and Mr. Vance Serchuk, the Foreign Affairs Advisor.

13. (C) Lieberman opened the meeting by noting that the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan is extremely important, but he, along with his fellow members, worried about the suspension of civil rights in Pakistan over the past few months. He also noted that he has great hope for the upcoming elections and their ability to be free and fair.

14. (C) Jahangir expressed great appreciation for the assistance that the U.S. and international community consistently provides, noting that Pakistan is not at stage where the country can survive on its own. She also expressed concern with the apparent close relationship between the American and Pakistani governments in that she sees Musharraf as an alienating force in Pakistan who is only concerned with how he and his party are to remain in power.

15. (C) Jahangir described the past few months as "tough," with many disappointing moments, including the November 3 proclamation of emergency, the suppression of the lawyers' movement, and the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. She noted that shortly before the proclamation, the HRCP had organized a dialogue on how to better strengthen the independence of the judiciary, but the lawyers were arrested shortly thereafter. The HRCP also received a strong blow when it realized that the recently released political party manifestos did not include much

attention to the needs of civil society or the concerns of human rights.

¶6. (C) Jahangir also expressed concern that unemployment, food and power shortages are plaguing the country. Lieberman responded that he had been in three meetings with Pakistani officials so far on his travel when the lights had gone out, and so he had seen this issue of lack of resources firsthand.

¶7. (C) Lieberman said that the U.S. would continue to encourage the GOP to ensure that the elections are free and fair. Asked to comment on Amin Faheem (the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) candidate for Prime Minister, Jahangir said that Faheem was a "decent" man -- not an intellectual but not a gangster" -- which says a great deal given other current Pakistani politicians. She also believes that the PPP will do very well in most areas, including those that would have normally gone to the ruling party. She also expressed great hope that the next National Assembly would give independence back to the judiciary and would restore a much-needed system of checks and balances within the GOP.

¶8. (C) Although she said she could not confirm it, Jahangir told Lieberman that she is receiving word from her sources that the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) is gathering arms in the belief that the Sindhis are soon to reopen a new operation against MQM. In a similar fashion, both PPP and Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) members are also gathering arms out of fear that as tensions rise among the hungry and unemployed, violence is inevitable. Finally, many in her organization also fear that the religious Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) is using this time to win hearts and minds through "bread mixed with Islam" appeal.

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¶9. (C) Ambassador recounted for the Senator a recent incident whereby Jahangir's daughters were bullied and detained by members of the PML-Q in Lahore on January 1. after one of their group ripped down an election poster for a ruling party candidate. Jahangir was forced to scale a wall in order to get to her daughters, and the police unfortunately sided with the party members. In response, Lieberman urged Jahangir to continue to persevere despite the great pressures placed upon her by her surroundings. He also noted that she was the second person of the day "without an ax to grind" who said that the PPP would win the elections, be responsible for forming the government, and ultimately force change for the people of Pakistan through a coalition.

¶10. Codel Lieberman did not clear this message.  
PATTERSON